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Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation

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Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Initiative



Once seen in great numbers across sagebrush landscapes of the West, sage-grouse have declined over the past century because of the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of the sagebrush habitats that are essential for their survival.

A broad segment of the public is concerned about the health of remaining sagebrush lands and the diverse plants and animals they support, prompting the formation of cooperative partnerships among wildlife agencies in Western states and Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Together, these partners plan and coordinate actions that conserve

and manage sagebrush habitat for the benefit of sage-grouse and the hundreds of other sagebrush-dependent species. The success of this rangewide effort relies on the involvement of numerous State, Federal and Tribal agencies, as well as interest groups and private landowners.

The BLM National Strategy for Conserving Sagebrush Habitat

In November 2004, the BLM released its *National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy*, which emphasizes partnership in conserving sage-grouse habitat, through consultation, cooperation, and communication with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, State wildlife



agencies, local sage-grouse working groups, and various other public and private partners.

The *National Strategy* provides Bureauwide guidance on sage-grouse habitat. Specifically, it provides interim guidance for managing sagebrush habitat on BLM-managed lands that are also used for grazing, recreation, mining and energy development.

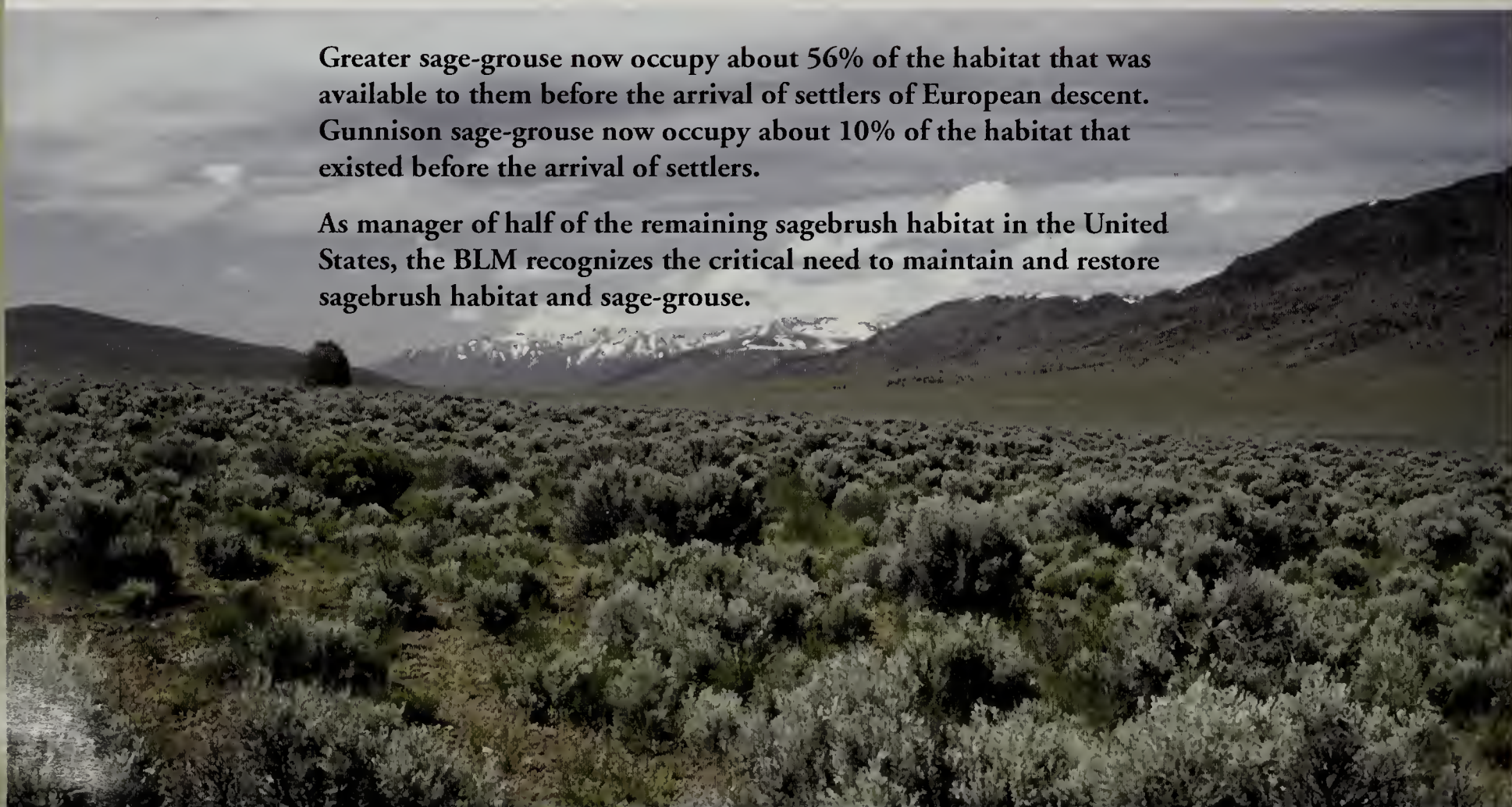
The *National Strategy* is assisting BLM State Offices as they develop State-level strategies in concert with parallel efforts by State wildlife agencies. BLM State-level strategies will complement State wildlife agency conservation plans by addressing BLM-specific considerations.

The BLM's State-level strategies will:

- guide the incorporation of sage-grouse habitat considerations into new and existing BLM land use plans after determining whether

Greater sage-grouse now occupy about 56% of the habitat that was available to them before the arrival of settlers of European descent. Gunnison sage-grouse now occupy about 10% of the habitat that existed before the arrival of settlers.

As manager of half of the remaining sagebrush habitat in the United States, the BLM recognizes the critical need to maintain and restore sagebrush habitat and sage-grouse.



existing plans adequately address those considerations.

- help ensure that BLM-authorized and BLM-permitted activities avoid or mitigate effects on sage-grouse habitat.
- set goals for enhancing sagebrush habitat to benefit sage-grouse populations and the more than 350 other species that depend on sagebrush ecosystems.

The BLM's State-level strategies are in various stages of completion and are closely related to efforts of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Funding Sage-Grouse Conservation

To further develop and implement the *National Strategy*, the BLM has requested \$3.6 million for its sage-grouse conservation efforts in Fiscal Year 2006. This funding will be used to conserve and enhance sage-grouse habitat on BLM-managed land across the West.

The *National Strategy* lists 48 actions to help the BLM maintain, enhance, and restore sagebrush habitats in coordination with Federal and State partners while ensuring multiple use and other goals outlined by Congress. These actions can be incorporated into other approved uses of public lands, including energy development, livestock grazing, mining, recreation, and fire management.

Sage-grouse also benefit from sagebrush restoration and invasive weed control projects funded through the BLM's Challenge Cost Share program.



Partnerships Yield On-the-Ground Successes

Managing for sage-grouse as a special-status species across diverse landscapes over the last three decades has allowed the BLM to be part of many successful approaches to sagebrush conservation.

- The BLM and its partners have studied sage-grouse strutting grounds in California's Long Valley and Mono Basin since the 1950s and have been restoring sagebrush lands there since the 1970s. A 2004 inventory revealed four previously unrecorded strutting grounds. Such data have been instrumental in developing a sage-grouse conservation strategy for California and Nevada.



- The BLM, in partnership with Utah Partners for Conservation and Development, is building a long-term, multijurisdictional team to restore, maintain, and improve the health of shrub-steppe ecosystems throughout Utah.
- A local working group made up of ranchers, sportsmen, State authorities, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the BLM designed a plan to manage grazing allotments and associated private lands in south-central Idaho, restore upland habitat, and protect nesting and winter habitat for sage-grouse. The result has been a significant increase in habitat quality even as livestock grazing continues at existing levels.

- Cooperation between the BLM and a ranch operation along the Utah-Wyoming border resulted in the successful treatment of overgrown sagebrush on more than 400 acres. Prescribed burning improved sage-grouse habitat by removing 30 to 60% of the overgrowth. Remarkable increases in brood and lek counts were recorded in the treated area.



- Working with industry and other partners, the BLM has developed best management practices that minimize the effects of energy development on sage-grouse and their habitat. Practices such as "greenstripping"—removing aging sagebrush and reseeded with more productive mixed vegetation—along access roads in a northeastern Utah oil and gas field, and interim reclamation and monitoring at surface coal mines in northwestern Colorado, have helped integrate multiple land uses as directed by law.

For the complete text of the *BLM National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy* and related guidance to BLM managers, a detailed list of partnership success stories, and links to other information about efforts to conserve sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat, visit www.blm.gov/nhp/spotlight/sage_grouse/.





The Bureau of Land Management

Today

Our Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.

Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Our Values

To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.

Our Priorities

To improve the health and productivity of the land to support the BLM multiple-use mission.

To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication.

To respect, value, and support our employees, giving them resources and opportunities to succeed.

To pursue excellence in business practices, improve accountability to our stakeholders, and deliver better service to our customers.

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